

Message Text

PAGE 01 KABUL 08197 300939Z

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 DRC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 AID-20

COME-00 EB-11 FRB-02 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02

LAB-06 SIL-01 STR-08 CEA-02 IGA-02 PC-15 SNM-02 CU-04

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R 300745Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5980

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 8197

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, AF

SUBJECT: DAOUD REGIME CONSOLIDATING CONTROL AS TRADITIONAL
AFGHAN GOVERNMENT STYLE RE-EMERGES

REF: KABUL 8075 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: SIGNS OF INCREASED ACTIVITY IN AFGHAN GOVERNMENT
AND ECONOMY INDICATE THAT DAOUD REGIME IS MORE FIRMLY AND
CONFIDENTLY IN SADDLE. NUMEROUS STRAWS IN WIND ALSO POINT TO
DAOUD'S HOPE FOR CONTINUED GOOD RELATIONS WITH U.S. SITUATION
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PAGE 02 KABUL 08197 300939Z

STILL FAR FROM NORMAL, BUT POST-COUP TOTAL PARALYSIS OF
ECONOMY AND GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING HAS DEFINITELY EASED.
WORKING LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY HAS AGAIN BEGUN TO
FUNCTION AND SOME BUSINESSMEN HAVE BEGUN TO ACCOMMODATE THEMSELVES

TO THE NEW ORDER. INTERNAL DIVISIONS AND POWER STRUGGLES WITHIN MINISTRIES CONTINUE AND MOST SENIOR OFFICIALS REMAIN WARY OF GOING OUT ON DECISION-MAKING LIMBS AND/OR HAVE YET TO ACQUIRE COMPETENCE AND EXPERIENCE NEEDED IN THEIR JOBS. BUT SOME NOW SHOW WILLINGNESS TO ACT ON OWN INITIATIVE. MOST IMPORTANT FAVORABLE SIGN, HOWEVER, IS SIMPLE FACT THAT NORMAL, EXTRA-GOVERNMENTAL EQUILIBRIUM OF AFGHAN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE IS SLOWLY RE-ESTABLISHING ITSELF. IN A COUNTRY WHERE ANY GOVERNMENT HAS LITTLE ACTUAL CONTROL OR INFLUENCE OVER LIVES OF VAST MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION, THIS IS KEY INDICATOR OF POLITICAL TEMPERATURE. WHETHER THE DAOUD REGIME WILL MOVE BEYOND ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL "NORMALCY" REMAINS TO BE SEEN. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER MORE THAN FOUR MONTHS IN POWER, DAOUD GOVERNMENT HAS BEGUN TO EXERT FIRMER CONTROL OVER MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT. PRE-OCCUPATION WITH POLITICAL SURVIVAL SEEMS TO BE LESS ALL-CONSUMING. DELAY AND CONFUSION STILL ABOUND AT ALL LEVELS BUT WE HAVE INCREASING EVIDENCE THAT TRADITIONAL "AFGHAN" SYSTEMS FOR GETTING NECESSARY THINGS DONE, BOTH GOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE, ARE AGAIN FUNCTIONING. "FOREIGN-ASSISTED" OPERATIONS IN VARIOUS MINISTRIES HAVE NOT FARED AS WELL, ALTHOUGH SOME PROGRESS IN SELECTED FIELDS IS ALSO NOTICEABLE. MANY NEW APPOINTMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE, SOME BETTER, SOME WORSE THAN PREVIOUS INCUMBENTS; ON THE WHOLE APPOINTEES ARE MORE LEFTIST BUT STILL AFGHAN IN OUTLOOK AND APPROACH. NEPOTISM RATHER THAN IDEOLOGY DOMINATES MANY RECENT APPOINTMENTS. ADMINISTRATION IS HARDLY INNOVATIVE IN AFGHANISTAN NO MATTER WHAT IDEOLOGY A REGIME ESPOUSES. PAUCITY OF NEW, DRAMATIC POLICY ANNOUNCEMENTS DOES NOT MEAN THAT AFGHAN OFFICIALS HAVE NOT BEGUN TO REACT TO AND FOLLOW WHAT THEY SENSE (IN TRADITIONAL AFGHAN WAY) TO BE PREFERENCES OF THEIR SUPERIORS. POLICY PRONOUNCEMENTS, SWEEPING REORGANIZATIONS OF DEPARTMENTS, ETC., ARE WESTERN-STYLE APPROACHES THAT STILL HAVE LITTLE RELATION TO THE ACTUAL DAY-TO-DAY SUBSTANCE OF GOVERNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN. WITH A SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE OF NEW APPOINTMENTS NOW MADE, GOVERNMENT MACHINERY IS NOW SLOWLY BEGINNING TO FUNCTION IN CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 KABUL 08197 300939Z

ITS TRADITIONAL AND HIGHLY PERSONAL ALBEIT, INEFFICIENT AND INEQUITABLE FASHION. COVERT ACTS OF CORRUPTION ARE RE-EMERGING AS COMMONPLACE.

2. IN JUDGING FORWARD MOTION, IT IS WISE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN AFGHAN PRIORITIES AND THOSE PROGRAMS AND PRIORITIES WHICH WESTERNERS FEEL TO BE OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE. THERE HAVE RECENTLY BEEN SEVERAL FAVORABLE STRAWS IN WIND CONCERNING US PROGRAMS AND PRESENCE HERE. AFTER MONTHS OF DELAY, A TWO-YEAR EXTENSION OF AID'S BASIC BILATERAL AGREEMENT (IN CONTRAST WITH PREVIOUS SIX-MONTH EXTENSIONS) WAS APPROVED ON NOVEMBER 27. AMBASSADOR ELIOT WAS RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT DAOUD WITHIN A WEEK OF HIS ARRIVAL IN COUNTRY AND WAS PERSONALLY

ASSURED THAT AFGHANISTAN DESIRES STRONG CONTINUED US PRESENCE. AFGHANS ARE NOW BEING SENT BY THEIR GOVERNMENT TO ATTEND NEW USAID STAFF DEVELOPMENT CENTER. TIGHT RESTRICTIONS ON FOREIGN SOCIAL CONTACTS WITH AFGHAN OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN RELAXED. OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS WITH US PROGRAMS AT MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND KABUL UNIVERSITY SEEM NOW TO BE GRADUALLY EASING. THESE INCREASINGLY APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN RESULT OF (A) BUREAUCRATIC INFIGHTING AND INEFFICIENCY AND (B) GENERAL EFFORT TO ASSERT MORE CONTROL OVER FOREIGN DONORS, WITH SOME COMPONENT OF IDEOLOGICAL ANTI-AMERICANISM SUPPLIED BY TWO OR THREE OFFICIALS, NOT RPT NOT A REFLECTION OF OVERALL GOV. POLICY. NO SIGNIFICANT NEW RESTRICTIONS HAVE BEEN APPLIED TO OPERATION OF US AIR ATTACHE PLANE DESPITE EARLIER INTIMATIONS THAT IT MIGHT BE GROUNDED. PEACE CORPS HAS RECEIVED WARM LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM DEPMIN OF EDUCATION FOR SCHOOLPARTNERSHIP PROGRAM, A SUDDEN AND COMPLETE REVERSAL OF VERY NEGATIVE LETTER SIGNED BY SAME OFFICIAL LESS THAN A MONTH EARLIER. IN WHAT ALSO MAY BE A MOVE TO PLACATE US, ONE REPORT FROM HELMAND VALLEY INDICATES THAT FARMERS ARE SHOWING SOME RELUCTANCE TO PLANT OPIUM THIS YEAR BECAUSE OF QUIET, UNPUBLICIZED BUT STRONG GOVERNMENT PRESSURE AGAINST ITS CULTIVATION.

3. KABUL UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS ARE AGAIN SHOWING STRONG DESIRE FOR CLOSE CONTACTS WITH US EXPERTS AS WELL AS MORE US ASSISTANCE. ON OTHER FRONTS GOVERNMENT HAS FINALLY RE-APPROVED THE NEW INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK, CREATED BY PREVIOUS REGIME TO SUPPORT PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENTS, AND HAS NOW ALLOWED MERCHANTS TO RESUME SOME OF NORMAL IMPORT AND EXPORT COMMERCIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 KABUL 08197 300939Z

TRANSACTIONS. CUSTOMS REVENUES HAVE PICKED UP A LITTLE FROM THEIR PREVIOUS DRASTIC LOWS. FREE MARKET FOREIGN EXCHANGE SYSTEM HAS RESUMED A LOW LEVEL OF OPERATIONS; EARLIER DIRE PREDICTIONS OF RIGID EXCHANGE CONTROLS HAVE NOT BEEN FULFILLED, AND AFGHANI HAS STARTED MOVING AWAY FROM ITS ARTIFICIALLY OVERVALUED LEVEL TOWARDS MORE REALISTIC EXCHANGE RATE. SIGNING LAST WEEK OF AGREEMENT WITH UN ON NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT MARKS SIGNIFICANT BENCHMARK. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION HAS JUST ANNOUNCED SOME LONG ADVOCATED REFORMS WHICH SHOULD PROVIDE FOR MORE EFFICIENT USE OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL SYSTEM. (PROMOTION FROM FIRST TO SECOND AND SECOND TO THIRD GRADES WILL BE AUTOMATIC, THUS ENSURING THAT ALL STUDENTS RECEIVE AT LEAST THREE YEARS OF EDUCATION AND PICK UP AT LEAST MINIMAL READING AND WRITING SKILLS. A SYSTEM OF TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTES IS BEING ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE SOME PROFESSIONAL AND METHODOLOGICAL TRAINING FOR TEACHERS BEYOND NORMAL 12TH GRADE LEVEL.)

4. IN AND OF THEMSELVES, MANY OF THESE CONDITIONS ARE RELATIVELY UNIMPORTANT. TAKEN TOGETHER, THEY POINT TO A GRADUAL RESUMPTION OF THE NORMAL PROCESS OF GOVERNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN. WHAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IS WHETHER THE DAUD REGIME WILL VIGOROUSLY

ATTACK PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ADVANCE IN THESE
AREAS BEYOND WHAT HAS BEEN "NORMAL" IN THE PAST. MORE
FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS REVOLVE AROUND THE FUTURE POLITICAL
STRUCTURE OF AFGHANISTAN, NOW LARGELY IN THE HANDS OF THE
TWO AGING BROTHERS.
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